MI/Access
Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program

The Assist
Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MICHIGAN
Department of
Education

P.O. Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: (517) 335-0471

Yolanda Stephens of the OSE/EIS answering phones for the MI-Access Teleconference

Teleconference Feedback and Updates Are Important

Dear Readers,

In January 2002, the MDE hosted this year's statewide MI-Access Live Teleconference. The purpose of the teleconference was twofold. First, it provided detailed information for District MI-Access Coordinators, School MI-Access Coordinators, and assessment administrators on the logistics that need to take place before, during, and after MI-Access is administered. Second, it provided another forum for you to ask me questions about the new assessment.

I thought the teleconference was a great success. I was particularly impressed by the intelligent and thoughtful questions you sent in before the conference and during the broadcast. The high quality of the questions tells me that everyone has come a long way in a very short time in understanding what MI-Access is, why we need it, and how to administer it.

Michigan Keeps Current on New Federal Legislation

Each year, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) offers states an opportunity to participate in one or more State Collaborative(s) on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS). Currently CCSSO offers membership in 11 different SCASS groups. Two of the SCASS groups that Michigan belongs to are: (1) the Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) group, and (2) the Assessing Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) group. (For more information on the different SCASS groups, consult the CCSSO web site at http://www.ccsso.org/scass/index.html).

The ASES project has been operating for four years and has identified many topics for discussion and research. The project has published four papers, and several others are under development. The group is co-sponsored by the National Center for Educational Outcomes and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

John Olson, CCSSO

Twenty-one states participated in the SCASS during 2000-2001: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia. Each state sends two participants to each SCASS meeting. Peggy Dutcher, Coordinator, State Assessment for Students

Check it out!

The assessment component of the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services' Web site

www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped

NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR

Remember: Your MI-Access materials must be shipped to BETA/TASA by April 12, 2002

Now that the administration window for MI-Access is over, District Coordinators should be collecting the assessment materials from their schools. To allow sufficient time for scanning, scoring, and reporting, all USED materials must be shipped to our offices in Brewster, New York by April 12th. It will help facilitate the process if the "Preparing Materials for Shipment" and "Shipping Materials" procedures are followed as described on page 11 of the MI-Access Coordinator/Administration Manual. These procedures are also described below. (NOTE: Please do not use paper clips, rubber bands, or foam when assembling and packing materials. They will interfere with the processing technology.)

Procedures for Return Shipment of Materials

1. Group Teacher Return Envelopes from each school with their corresponding green *School ID Sheets*.
2. Place all of the used materials in the original box or boxes in which they were received.
3. Make a copy, for your records, of the gray *District ID Sheet and Order for Scoring Services* and place it on top of the materials in the box. If you have more than one box, place the *District ID Sheet* in the first, or "1 of X," box.
4. Place the plastic bags containing *Teacher Feedback Forms* in the box on top of the other materials.
5. If the materials do not fill the box, fill it with paper (NOT foam) packing.
6. Seal the box or boxes with packing tape.
7. Find your prepaid Return Shipment (R.S.) UPS label(s). If you use this label, we will cover your shipping costs. If not, your District will incur the cost of shipping.
8. Verify all information on the label, including the number of boxes to be returned, and correct if necessary.
9. Peel off the backing and affix the label(s) to the original shipping box or boxes. Use one label for each box being returned.
10. Make a note of the tracking number. This number can be found in between the two bar codes.
11. Give the box or boxes to your regular UPS driver, drop the box off at the nearest UPS pickup site, or call UPS for pickup at 1-800-742-5877.

Following these procedures in a timely and careful manner will help us here at BETA/TASA to provide a prompt and accurate return of information to the Michigan Department of Education and, in turn, to the state's local districts.

Web Notes

- You can now receive *The Assist* newsletter online. Register for your online subscription at **www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped**.
- If you e-mail questions to the **mi-access@tasa.com** address, please include the name of your district in the e-mail.

State Assessment Checklist for the IEP Team

✓ Determine if each MEAP assessment is appropriate for the student.

✓ If yes, are assessment accommodations needed? Specify for each MEAP test.

✓ If MEAP tests are not appropriate, you must always explain why for each MEAP test.

✓ If MEAP tests are not appropriate, even with accommodations; will the student take MI-Access Participation or Supported Independence (Alternate Assessment)?

✓ If MI-Access Participation or Supported Independence is not appropriate, how will the student be assessed? Specify.

Getting set up for the teleconference (Bob Nichols, Moderator and Peggy Dutcher)

Teleconference Feedback and Updates Are Important

My impressions, however, are not nearly as important as yours. For that reason, after you have completed your part in administering MI-Access, I would greatly appreciate it if you would take a moment to fill out the teleconference feedback form. The form is available by clicking on the "What's New" button on the MI-Access Coordinator/Administration Manual CD-ROM. Your feedback will enable us to make the teleconference even more helpful next year.

The teleconference was one in a series of efforts at the Department to deliver information on MI-Access via different media. Since we know that people learn in different ways, we plan to continue offering information in different forms. As always, we welcome your input on this—and any other—aspect of the program.

Peggy Dutcher
Coordinator
State Assessment for Students
with Disabilities
E-mail: dutcherp@mi.gov

IDEAS TIPS SUGGESTIONS

If you have ideas, suggestions, or tips you would like to see included in *The Assist,* send them to mi-access@tasa.com.

Missing Links Found for Curriculum Access – All Really Does Mean All

By: Michelle Goodwin, Director of Professional Services, Ionia ISD

Michelle Goodwin

Several weeks ago, at a workshop designed to bring teachers, principals, and assessment coordinators up to date on the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS), I was challenged by a teacher to explain how MI-Access could possibly be related to the Content Standards and Benchmarks of the Michigan Curriculum Framework (MCF), particularly when the performance expectations being assessed with MI-Access were not explicitly academic in nature. This notable question allowed me to share with my workshop participants the interrelationships between special education and general education – interrelationships that are so pertinent in the phrase that is the cornerstone of the MEAS, as well as IDEA and so many mission statements for schools: "All students . . ."

"All" means "all." And it is this phrase that was taken to heart as groups of teachers and curriculum directors, under the direction of Peggy Dutcher, worked numerous days over the past three years to define the link between the Content Standards and Benchmarks and the Performance Expectations from Addressing the Unique Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities (AUEN). It was an eye- and heart-opening experience for general education teachers, some of whom were seeing the AUEN for the first time. It was equally exciting for special education teachers who were newly delving into the MCF.

The process went like this. Groups of six to seven teachers, mostly special education teachers, worked with one or more content area general education teachers, alternately reading each content standard from the MCF and each performance expectation from AUEN. After a discussion of what each standard and each performance expectation meant, a number of 0, 1, or 2 was assigned to designate the link between the two documents. A designation of "0," meant there was no link between the performance expectation and the content standard. A designation of "1" meant that there was a link between either the "process" or "content" of the standard and the requirements of the performance expectation. And, a designation of "2" indicated that there was a direct link between the content standard (process and content) and the performance expectation. This work was done for all content areas with the exception of World Languages.

A concrete example might clarify the process. The first MCF content standard for History Perspective reads as follows: "All students will sequence chronologically the following eras of American history and key events within these eras in order to examine relationships and explain cause and effect." AUEN Performance Expectation 3 for Supported Independence states: "Students will manage personal work assignments." After reading the benchmarks for the content standard and the performance requirements for the performance expectation, the group working on social studies marked the link as a "1." While the performance expectation does not require students to be able to list historical eras in chronological order, students functioning as Supported Independence are required to understand and be able to place events or activities in correct time order. Ultimately, while the American history content of what event happened when is not met by this performance expectation, the process of being able to sequence events is.

Anyone who has worked with scope and sequence or curriculum mapping understands how grueling the work can be. My hat is off to the teachers and

Phase 2 MI-Access Update

The development of Phase 2 MI-Access assessments is moving forward. The Phase 2 MI-Access assessments are being developed for students for whom the IEP Team has determined that MEAP, MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation or MI-Access Supported Independence are not appropriate.

During February 2002, the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC) and Charles Allan, Acting Supervisor of the MDE Curriculum Leadership Unit, met and heard presentations from numerous commercial test-publishing companies, including Harcourt, Riverside Publishing, AGS, and CTB McGraw Hill. The purpose of the presentations was to explore whether there were any existing mathematics and reading assessments that would adequately (1) meet the needs of the Phase 2 student population being assessed, (2) demonstrate alignment with Michigan's Model Content Standards, and (3) assess students at the same grades as the MEAP. If such an assessment exists, it could possibly expedite the implementation of part of the Phase 2 MI-Access assessments. The AAAC is continuing in collaboration with BETA/TASA, the MI-Access contractor, to develop a draft Phase 2 MI-Access Assessment Plan.

Joint SCASS meeting: Grace Ross, Title 1 (left)
Jan Sheiker, CAS Coordinator

Michigan Keeps Current on New Federal Legislation

with Disabilities, and Frank McClelland, Special Education Consultant, are Michigan's representatives. Peggy Dutcher is also on the ASES Steering Committee and chairs the workgroup on "Communication and Personnel Development."

February 6 – 8, 2002, the ASES SCASS met in New Orleans. Much of the agenda focused on the reauthorization of Title 1, the reauthorization of IDEA, and the new federal legislation, called "No Child Left Behind." One of the three days was devoted to a joint meeting of the ASES SCASS group and the Comprehensive Assessment System for IASA Title 1 (CAS). The two groups had the opportunity to discuss all three of the federal initiatives with federal representatives, Grace Ross, Title 1, and Cynthia Bryant, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

Cynthia Bryant joined us by conference call, but Grace Ross was present and provided an excellent summary of the key issues in the "No Child Left Behind" legislation that relate specifically to special education and Title 1. The PowerPoint presentation she used can be obtained from the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Service's Web site at **www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped**.

Following Ms. Ross's presentation, a healthy discussion took place between the panel members and the participating states. Many thoughtful issues and concerns were raised by the states and will be included in public comment on the federal initiatives.

If you are interested in more information on the "No Child Left Behind" legislation, go to **www.ed.gov/nclb/testingforresults**.

District MI-Access Coordinators! What's Your E-Mail Address?

A note to District MI-Access Coordinators: If you have not already done so, please send your e-mail address to the MI-Access contractor at **mi-access@tasa.com**. A Listserv has been created through which the MI-Access team can disseminate time-sensitive information, important updates, and critical announcements. If we do not have your e-mail address, you may be missing this important information. Following are some things that have been distributed thus far via the Listserv.

- The MI-Access Communication Guide
- The MI-Access Live Teleconference Q and A
- MI-Access Standard Setting Nomination Information
- Updated "such as" examples for Supported Independence Age 10, Activity 4
- MI-Access Teleconference downlink information

Don't wait. Do it today. You will be glad you did.
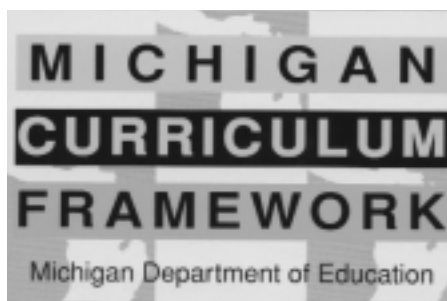
Missing Links Found for Curriculum Access

curriculum directors from around the entire state of Michigan, including the Upper Peninsula, who took the time to bring their knowledge and experience to the table for this linking process. Their work allowed me to begin my explanation by saying to the teacher at my workshop, "Oh, my gosh! You wouldn't believe how many content standards and benchmarks are accessed in special education." Special education students do have access to the general curriculum. Currently the MDE is finalizing a linking document. When it is eventually distributed, all teachers will be better able to show student progress within the general curriculum. So, maybe, "ALL" really does mean "ALL."

For Those of Us Who Don't Like to Read Manuals…
Enter the MI-Access CD-ROM

Who better than educators understand that different people have different learning styles? And, we understand that what interests and excites one person is not the same as what interests and excites another. For that very reason, the MI-Access staff decided to put the Coordinator/Administration Manual— as well as other pertinent information about MI-Access—on CD-ROM.

The disks were mailed to District MI-Access Coordinators in January along with other MI-Access assessment materials. There should have been enough copies so that every District MI-Access Coordinator, School MI-Access Coordinator, and assessment administrator could have their own CD.

The CD-ROM contains information on

- the Michigan Department of Education;
- BETA/TASA, the MI-Access contractor;
- contacts;
- the MI-Access schedule;

- federal and state policies and guidelines (as they relate to MI-Access);
- the students to be assessed;
- the complete MI-Access Coordinator/Administration Manual;
- additional materials and information; and
- links to other relevant web sites, including "What's New" on MI-Access.

In addition to written information, you will find numerous video clips that provide more in-depth explanations and helpful graphics and visuals.

The CD-ROM begins with an introduction by Kathleen Straus, President of the Michigan State Board of Education, and Tom Watkins, Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction. It then opens to a page that looks like a schoolroom bulletin board and contains links to the nine main areas of the CD-ROM. When a cursor rolls over these areas, a short descriptor will pop up. Any blue text indicates an active link; the picture of a video camera indicates an accompany-

ing video clip; and red PDF buttons indicate documents you may want to read or print.

You will also find a classroom scene on the CD-ROM in which there are (1) a light bulb (simply click on it to share your ideas about MI-Access), and (2) a bookshelf, which links to a MI-Access glossary and the previous page.

While the MI-Access CD-ROM is intended for use by those directly involved in administering MI-Access assessments, you may also find it of use in explaining MI-Access to colleagues, parents, the press, and others. You may be as creative with it as your imagination allows.

As you know, we are constantly striving to make our MI-Access materials as helpful and user-friendly as possible. Your input will help us in that endeavor. To register your feedback on the CD-ROM, click on the "What's New" button on the bulletin board page of the CD-ROM and go to "Give Us Your Feedback."
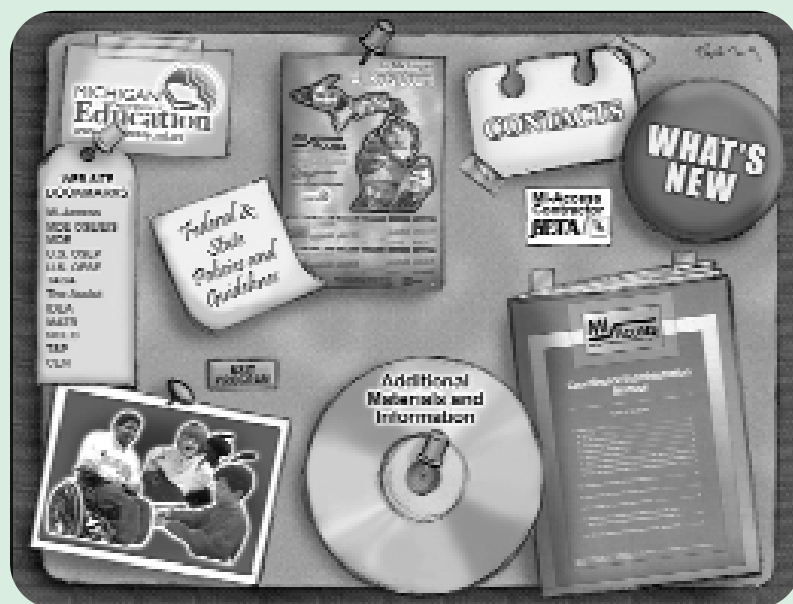
REMINDER:
At a minimum, you will need Quicktime 5.0 to operate the CD-ROM.
You can download Quicktime 5.0 by going to
www.apple.com/quicktime/
and following the step-by-step directions.

What Do I Do With My *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Forms* for Grade 11 Students?

Since the high school MEAP is not administered until spring and MI-Access is administered in February and March, many MI-Access Coordinators and assessment administrators have asked WHEN they should return their Determined by *IEP Team Scannable Forms* for grade 11 students. Should they send them back with the MI-Access materials in April or hold on to them until the end of the spring MEAP assessment window?

Before answering that question, keep in mind that the *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Forms* should only be completed for students who are not taking any of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation, or MI-Access Supported Independence. If the student is taking any one of these assessments (or any part of the MEAP), then the form is not needed. Also keep in mind that *only* a student's IEP Team can determine which assessment is appropriate for the student.

In answer to the specific question raised, if a grade 11 student is not taking any of the MEAP, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation, or MI-Access Supported Independence assessments, then a *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Form* must be completed. And, it must be shipped to the MI-Access contractor with all other MI-Access assessment materials by April 12, 2002.

There is only one exception to that rule. If, after the MI-Access window is finished, a grade 11 student who was scheduled to take the MEAP, with or without assessment accommodations, does not take ANY of the high school MEAP tests in the spring, then a *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Form* must be filled out for that student by May 10, 2002. Following is the procedure for District MI-Access Coordinators for making that happen.

- Before sending MI-Access materials to the MI-Access contractor (on or before April 12, 2002), District MI-Access Coordinators should make a copy of their completed gray *District ID Sheet* and keep it for their records.

- Save any extra shipping labels, scan sheets, *Teacher ID Sheets*, and Teacher Return Envelopes.

- If the IEP Team determines, after April 12th, that a grade 11 student will no longer be taking any of the MEAP tests then:

  ✓ Contact the MI-Access contractor for more (1) *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Forms* (one for each student to whom this applies), (2) *Teacher ID Sheets* (for the students' teachers of record), and (3) Teacher Return Envelopes (as needed). To order these materials, complete the "Additional Materials Request Form" found in the MI-Access Coordinator/Administration Manual and fax it to the contractor at 1-845-277-8142.

  ✓ Also, if you do not have any extra UPS R.S. labels for returning materials free-of-charge to the MI-Access contractor, call the contractor at 1-888-382-4246 or e-mail them at **mi-access@tasa.com** to make shipping arrangements.

- When you have located or received the needed materials from the MI-Access contractor:

Teachers should:

  ✓ Complete the *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Form(s)* for each grade 11 student whose IEP Team has determined— after the district MI-Access materials were returned to the contractor—

that the MEAP tests are no longer appropriate.

  ✓ Complete the *Teacher ID Sheet*.
  ✓ Put the *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Form(s) and Teacher ID Sheet* in the Teacher Return Envelope and return it unsealed to the School MI-Access Coordinator.

School MI-Access Coordinators should:

  ✓ Complete the green *School ID Sheet*.
  ✓ Return the green *School ID Sheet* along with the unsealed Teacher Return Envelopes to the District MI-Access Coordinator.

District MI-Access Coordinators should:

  ✓ Inventory and spot check all materials returned by the School MI-Access Coordinator(s).
  ✓ Add updated information to the PHOTOCOPIED *District ID Sheet*.
  ✓ Make a copy of the updated, photocopied sheet to keep for your records.
  ✓ Seal all the Teacher Return Envelopes after checking them.
  ✓ Return all the additional materials to the MI-Access contractor (following the shipping instructions on pages 11 and 12 of the Winter 2002 Coordinator/Administration Manual).
  ✓ Let the MI-Access contractor know by phone (1-888-382-4246) or by e-mail (**mi-access@tasa.com**) that additional materials will be coming. The materials should include (1) *District ID Sheets*, (2) *School ID Sheets*, (3) *Teacher ID Sheets*, (4) *Determined by IEP Team Scannable Forms*, and (5) Teacher Return Envelopes.
  ✓ Return the materials no later than May 10, 2002.

If you have any questions about how to complete a form, please refer to the hard copy or CD-ROM version of the Coordinator/Administration Manual.

Assessment Practices that Promote Student Self-Determination

By Sharon Field Hoffman, Ed.D., Wayne State University and Jan Yoak-Newman, Director Transition Services Project

Sharon Field Hoffman

Promoting self-determination is an important component of effective transition and educational programming. Self-determination has been defined as "the ability to identify and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself" (Field & Hoffman, 1994, p.136). The degree to which a person is self-determined is affected both by the supports and opportunities for self-determination available in the environment and the knowledge, skills and beliefs of the individual. Environmental factors that affect self-determination include such things as opportunities for choice, support for appropriate risk-taking and the availability of accommodations. Individual knowledge, skills and beliefs that lead to self-determination include such factors as self-awareness, belief in self, decision-making, planning, goal-setting skills, communication skills and self-reflection.

Jan Yoak-Newman

Increasingly, the knowledge, skills and beliefs that lead to self-determination are being taught within the general and special education curriculum. Furthermore, students are being offered opportunities to pursue self-determination by taking a more active role in transition planning and in other decisions that affect their lives.

The concept of self-determination has important implications for assessment practices. First, self-determination needs to be addressed across all areas of a program and not viewed as an isolated area of instruction. Therefore, it is important to conduct all assessment in a way that supports student self-determination. Second, knowledge and skills related to self-determination need to be assessed just as any other instructional area is assessed to develop sound educational programs.

Promoting Self-Determination through the Assessment Process

The educational assessment process provides a vehicle to model, encourage and support student and family self-determination. By involving students and families as important team members in the assessment process, valuable information can be gathered, student and family ownership of assessment results is increased, and support for student self-determination is demonstrated.

Within a self-determination framework, students and their families are at the center of the assessment process. They participate in determining the questions that need to be answered through assessment and have input into the design of the assessment process. Student and family involvement at the beginning of the assessment process also helps to increase commitment to the process and helps to ensure that key factors from the perspective of students and parents are taken into account.

Self-determination for students and families can also be promoted through the data-gathering phase of assessment. For example, students can participate in collecting assessment information by completing self-report instruments, participating in interviews, or evaluating their own progress using checklists or other monitoring devices. Families can complete questionnaires or interviews, provide information about observed student interests or behaviors and support active student participation in assessment activities.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, students and families should be integrally involved in using assessment data for educational planning. This is particularly important in the Individualized Educational Planning (IEP) process. However, active involvement by students and families should go beyond participation in the IEP and become incorporated into the ongoing assessment used throughout the educational program.

Assessing Self-Determination Characteristics

To help students develop self-determination skills, student characteristics related to self-determination need to be assessed. According to Sitlington, Neubert, Begun, Lombard & LeConte (1996), appropriate assessment uses:

❏ a variety of assessment methods,

❏ behavioral assessment as one of the key assessment methods, and

❏ a collaborative approach to data collection and decision-making.

Some methods available to assess self-determination knowledge and skills are described on the following page.

➢ **Analysis of background information.** Reviewing records can provide valuable information about a student's preferences, interests, knowledge and skills. Student portfolios are one of the most useful sources of information related to self-determination since students typically play a central role in gathering and combining portfolio contents.

➢ *Interviews.* Interviews with students, family members and other pertinent individuals can be an excellent tool for gathering information about a student's self-determination skills, as well as his/her preferences, interests, goals and past experiences. One of the advantages of interviews is that they can help identify needs perceived by the student and other important individuals. They can also help identify any discrepancies in perception between important team members.

➢ *Behavioral observation.* Behavioral observation is one of the best, most authentic assessment strategies. Observations provide an opportunity to assess applied skills in natural environments. However, they can also be affected by the perceptions and biases of the observer. Using a systematic approach for observing student behavior (e.g., narrative recording, time sampling, rating scales) can help minimize the effect of observer bias. More information on observational techniques can be found in *Assess for Success* (Sitlington et al., 1996).

➢ *Curriculum-based assessment techniques.* Curriculum-based assessment techniques, including portfolio assessment, have gained popularity in recent years. They are an authentic means of assessment and allow the student to be placed at the center of the assessment process. Portfolios provide an excellent vehicle to track student progress toward self-selected goals or acquisition of self-determination competencies.

➢ *Standardized instruments.* Several standardized instruments are available to assess knowledge and skills related to self-determination. The primary use of these instruments is to compare student performance over time and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs. A sampling of such instruments is provided below.

• *The Arc's Self- Determination Scale* (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 2000) is a student self-report measure designed for use by adolescents with disabilities, particularly students with mild cognitive and learning disabilities. The 72-item scale measures overall self-determination and the domain areas of autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment, and self-realization.

• *Choice Maker Self-Determination Assessment* (Martin, Marshall, 1996) is a curriculum-based assessment and planning tool intended for use with middle and high school students with emotional or behavior disabilities and mild or moderate learning problems. It measures student skills and opportunities in three areas: choosing goals, expressing goals and taking action.

• *Self-Determination Assessment Battery* (Hoffman, Field & Sawilowsky) includes a variety of instruments that can be used alone or in combination. The instruments include (1) the Self-Determination Knowledge Scale (an objective test of knowledge related to concepts taught in the *Steps to Self-Determination* curriculum), (2) the Self-Determination Student Scale (a self-report item that measures affective and cognitive aspects of self-determination), (3) the Self-Determination Observation Checklist (a behavioral checklist for use by classroom teachers), and (4) the Teacher and Parent Perception Scales on which teachers or parents rate their student or child using a five point Likert-type scale on a variety of behaviors, abilities, and skills associated with self-determination.

Summary

Effective assessment practices are essential to all instructional programs, including those aimed at the development of self-determination competencies. Furthermore, the manner in which assessment is conducted across content areas can contribute to or detract from student self-determination. Further information on self-determination and assessment practices can be found in A Practical Guide to Teaching Self-Determination (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward & Wehmeyer, 1998).

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Hoffman, A., Field, S. & Sawilowsky, S. (1996). S*elf-determination Assessment Battery*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University.

Hoffman, A., Field, S. & Sawilowsky, S. (1996). Self-determination Knowledge Scale. Austin, TX: ProEd.

Martin, J. & Marshall, L. (1996). *Choice Maker*: *Self-Determination Assessment. Colorado Springs*, CO: University of Colorado. (published by Sopris West)

Sitlington, P.L., Neubert, D., Begun, W., Lombard, R. & LeConte, P. (1996). *Assess for Success*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Wehmeyer, M. & Kelchner, K. (2000). *The Arc's Self-Determination Scale*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY: During a student's IEP Team meeting, members may consider whether or not Assistive Technology could benefit the student. The Michigan Assistive Technology Resource (MATR) provides resources that could help with that discussion. MATR materials may also assist parents and educators in identifying and acquiring the most appropriate Assistive Technology supports for a particular student. The article that follows is taken from the MATR awareness training materials and is presented as a guide for IEP Teams.

Assistive Technology and the Individualized Education Program

Compiled by Joe Benstein, Independent Educational Consultant

In the commentary surrounding the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, the United States Congress said that disability is a natural part of the human experience which does not diminish an individual's right to

- live independently;
- enjoy self-determination;
- make choices;
- benefit from education;
- pursue meaningful careers; and
- enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society.

Congress recognized that technology has become a major driving force of economic activity and is one of the main strengths contributing to the richness of the United States. Congress also expressed a desire that individuals with disabilities have access to existing technologies and information through the use of assistive technology (AT), which, it was noted, is becoming harder to distinguish from mainstream technology.

There are a number of principles that have proven true over time with regard to AT. Although not specific to AT, the overriding principle in education is that all children can learn. With this in mind, we then can explore the AT principles that allow learning to occur.

- Users and service providers need to keep themselves informed about changes in technology. AT is a necessity for many people with disabilities, and to prevent device abandonment and under-utilization, users of the technology, as well as AT service providers, need to be aware of the continuum of options.

- Technology can be expensive. There will be individuals who require expensive and complex AT devices; however, many more may require simple solutions at minimal expense.

- Work out funding issues well in advance. Funding for AT has been a stumbling block for many in the education setting. Generally, this is due to a lack of policies and planning for AT. Many issues related to funding AT can be avoided with a proactive approach.

- Fit the device to the person, not the person to the device. If the user is going to benefit and utilize AT, the AT must be appropriate for the user. Many times we expect the user of the technology to adapt to the technology rather than the other way around.

- Present as many options as possible. AT is a continuum and not every option will work. Even when a device is deemed appropriate, there may be delays in implementation due to the time it takes to order and receive the device, time for training, and possible breakdowns of the device after it is acquired. Planning for options is necessary to insure continued services as well as compliance with the individual's IEP.

- Low tech is smart tech. The legislation surrounding AT does not say that it must be "high technology." More complex technologies are not necessarily "best" for a particular individual. Generally, the more complex the device the higher the cost, the more training that is required, and more frequent maintenance may be necessary.

- Try it before you buy it. There are many lending libraries in existence at the state and district levels. Many vendors have rental or loan programs to help determine the appropriateness of a device.

- Training on the use of AT is crucial. Lack of adequate training for the user, families of the user, and/or service providers, is one of the major reasons for device abandonment and under-utilization. Training is also a component that is not often planned for or is cut from budgets.

- The person to whom AT is given determines whether or not it is actually used. No matter how useful and/or appropriate an AT device may appear, if the user does not use it, it is not "assistive technology" at all.

How Do We Consider AT at the IEP?

With IDEA 97 we must now consider AT for all students at the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team meeting. It is necessary to consider AT accommodations that will ensure the student a free and appropriate public education.

There are several points in the IEP process at which AT can be considered.

- **Child Study Teams.** Building "Child Study Teams" may begin the process of looking at AT interventions. One of the roles of child study teams is to look for interventions that will keep the student in the least restrictive environment. Consideration of AT prior to a student becoming eligible for special

meap Accommodations

The following test accommodations, for students with disabilities, will be considered "standard accommodations" for Michigan Merit Award purposes.

STANDARD ACCOMMODATIONS

Scheduling
- Provision of additional testing time
- Allowance of frequent or extended supervised breaks
- Administration of the test at a time most beneficial to the student, with appropriate supervision by a school district professional

Location
- Provision for test administration at home or in a care facility with appropriate supervision by a school district professional
- Provision for distraction-free space or alternate location (e.g., study carrel, front of classroom)
- Placement of student where he/she is most comfortable (e.g., front of room, back of room)
- Administration of test in a special education classroom
- Provision for individual test administration (supervised)
- Provision of special lighting
- Provision of adaptive or special furniture
- Provision for freedom to move, stand or pace during an individualized test administration
- Provision of special acoustics
- Provisions for test administration in a small group
- Provision of soft, calming music to minimize distractions

Assistance with Test Directions
- Reading directions to student
- Re-reading of directions for each subtask, as required
- Use of directions that have been highlighted
- Simplification of language in directions (paraphrase)
- Emphasis on verbs in directions
- Provision for student restatement of directions in his/her own words
- Use of sign language or oral interpreters for directions and sample items
- Clarification of directions by asking students to restate them

Assistance During Assessment
- Administration of test by special education teacher or similarly qualified person
- Reading of assessment content and questions to student (except for the reading test)
- Signing of assessment content and questions to student (except for the reading test)
- Use of page-turner
- Recording of student responses (writing or audio tape)
- Placement of teacher/proctor near student

Equipment and Assistive Technology
- Use of talking calculator (mathematics test only)
- User of sign language to indicate student response, except for constructed response items
- Use of text-talk converter (except for the reading test)
- Use of visual magnification devices
- Use of auditory amplification devices
- Use of masks, overlays or markers to maintain place
- Use of tape-recorder for use of audio tape version of tests (except for the reading test)
- Use of Braille writer for recording responses
- Use of communications device to indicate responses
- Use of calculator (mathematics assessments only)
- Use of rulers as provided by Michigan Educational Assessment Program
- Use of pencils adapted in size or grip
- Use of list of formulae as provided by Michigan Educational Assessment Program
- Use of noise buffers
- Use of computer or word processing equipment (spellcheck, thesaurus and grammar check must be disabled)
- Use of bilingual translation dictionary
- Use of Braille ruler
- Use of acetate colored shield to reduce glare and increase contrast
- Use of voice-activated word processor (except for writing assessment)
- Use of devices or equipment to secure paper to desk

Test Format
- Use of lined or grid paper for recording answers
- Provision of Braille or large print editions of the assessments
- Permission to mark answers in test booklet, to be transferred to answer document by teacher or proctor
- Use of computer for task presentation
- Communication of test questions by audiotape (except for the reading test)
- Use of scribe for constructed response items (student must indicate punctuation and spell all key words)
- Permission to accomplish subtests in different order

Accommodations not on this list will be considered "non-standard," and MEAP test scores accomplished by use of non-standard accommodations will not be considered eligible scores for Michigan Merit Award purposes. Examples of such non-standard accommodations would include the following:

NONSTANDARD ACCOMMODATIONS
- Any accommodation not included as a standard accommodation that violates the Michigan Merit Award Test Administration Ethics Procedure
- Use of a calculator on any MEAP assessment other than mathematics assessments
- Use of electronic spell checkers, thesaurus or grammar check
- Use of a dictionary, thesaurus or spelling book for mathematics, science, social studies or reading assessments
- Any test administration not directly supervised by a school district professional

Accommodations not included on the Standard Accommodations list, which in the opinion of school officials, parents, teachers or other interested parties do not violate the MEAP Test Administration Ethics policy and do not interfere with the intent of the assessments, may be approved by the Michigan Merit Award executive director, pending review by the Michigan Merit Award Board.

REMINDER!

When the IEP Team or Section 504 Plan Team discusses accommodations for the MEAP assessment, the following assessment accommodations are NON-STANDARD for the MEAP assessments. If a non-standard assessment is used the student's score(s) will NOT be eligible for Merit Award or endorsements.
- Reading of assessment content and questions to student for the reading test
- Signing of assessment content and questions to student for the reading test
- Use of text-talk converter for the reading test
- Use of tape-recorder for use of audio tape version of tests for the reading test
- Communication of test questions by audiotape for the reading test
- Any accommodation not included as a standard accommodation that violates the Michigan Merit Award Test Administration Ethics Procedure
- Use of a calculator on any MEAP assessment other than mathematics assessments
- Use of electronic spell checkers, thesaurus or grammar check
- Use of a dictionary, thesaurus or spelling book for mathematics, science, social studies or reading assessments
- Any test administration not directly supervised by a school district professional

education may keep the student in the least restrictive environment, as well as begin to document AT interventions that work or show promise for a particular student.

- **Evaluation/Assessment.** The evaluation or assessment process is another logical time to identify AT that uses the individual's strengths to achieve curriculum benchmarks or the stated goals and objectives for that student.

- **Goals and objectives.** When considering AT the team needs to be clear on "what it wants the individual to do?" The goals and objectives are what we want the individual to do. AT is not a goal. The goal is what we want them to do using the technology.

- **Implementation.** Implementation of AT is not the end of considering AT. We must continually fine-tune the intervention to ensure that goals and objectives

are being met and that responsibilities, in the form of services, are carried out. AT issues related to acquiring, maintaining, and training, should be continually considered. Follow-up must be included in the implementation process to be sure the AT is accomplishing what was intended, and if not, why not?

- **Review.** Consideration of AT in the review process is not the same as follow-up. If a student has achieved success in attaining the stated goals on the IEP, the review will address new goals and objectives to be achieved. In some cases this may mean adjusting existing AT or using entirely new technologies that had not previously been considered. Similarly, if goals and objectives have not been met, consideration of AT may require adjustments to or an entirely new AT technology intervention.

IEP TIME RESOURCE!

MDE IEP Manual and model documents are available at:

http://www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped/LIBRARY/IEPT/IEPT_index.html

Proposed Merit Award Board Policy on MEAP Testing Practices

The "MEAP Testing Policy Draft." is very important for you to know about and share with your colleagues. The previous "MEAP Ethics Policy" did not go through the formal rules process, this one is and it will become law.

NOTE: The following information was taken from a February 26, 2002 memo sent to all Local and Intermediate Superintendents and MEAP District Test Coordinators.

The Michigan Merit Award Board has authorized for distribution and public comment, proposed revisions to Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Testing Practices document, formerly known as the "MEAP Ethics Policy." The purpose of the proposed policy is to ensure the MEAP

tests are administered fairly to all students and the results of these assessments are reliable and valid measures for all students.

The document is available on the Merit Award Web site at www.MeritAward.state.mi.us. Under "Options," choose "MEAP Testing Policy Draft." The MEAP Office encourages you to disseminate the proposal broadly among your staff.

They expect to review comments received from the field in March and anticipate holding a public hearing in April in preparation for the Administrative Rules process. If you have questions or concerns about the proposed policy, you can mail them to the following address:

Michigan Educational Assessment Program P.O. Box 30715 Lansing, Michigan 48909-8215 Attention: Patti Lehman

If you prefer, your questions or concerns may be e-mailed to the MEAP office at lehmanp@michigan.gov.

GLOSSARY

CCSSO: (Council of Chief State School Officers) A nationwide, non-profit organization composed of public officials who lead departments responsible for elementary and secondary education in the states, the U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity. In representing the chief education officers, CCSSO works on behalf of the state agencies that serve pre K - 12 students throughout the nation.

ASES: (Assessing Special Education Students) CCSSO project, in it's fourth year of operation, which has identified many topics for discussion and research. The group is cosponsored by the National Center for Educational Outcomes and the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

SCASS: (State Collaboration on Assessment and Student Standards) Part of CCSSO, created in October 1991 to encourage and assist states in working collaboratively on assessment design and development in a variety of subject areas. The State Education Assessment Center of the CCSSO is the organizer, facilitator, and administrator of the projects.

Determined by IEP Team Scannable Form: A form currently used for students who are not taking any of the MEAP tests, MEAP with accommodations, MI-Access Supported Independence or MI-Access Participation alternate assessments. The purpose of the form is twofold: It helps meet state and federal reporting requirements and also gives the MDE feedback on what practitioners are using to assess this segment of the special education population.

The Assist

Important MI-Access Dates

Standard Setting Meetings
April 8-11

Ship MI-Access Materials to Contractor
by April 12, 2002

Standard Setting Committee Review
April 17, 18 & 22

MI-Access 2003 Assessment Window
February 17 - March 31, 2003

Bookmark these Web sites:
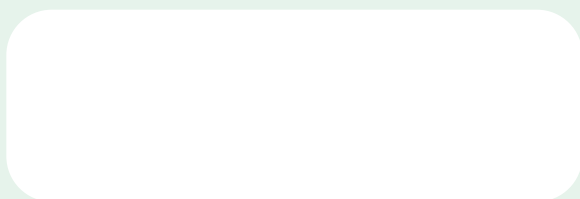
www.apple.com/quicktime/

www.matr.org

www.ccsso.org

www.ccsso.org/scass

www.ccsso.org/scass/p_ases/index.html

www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/esea/index/html